

# PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 8, 2006

## NOELANI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETORIUM

2655 WOODLAWN DRIVE

This Planning Committee meeting was held at the Malama O Manoa (MOM) quarterly general membership meeting at which a panel discussion was presented on the subject of “Visualizing the Future of Manoa Mauka”. The Malama O Manoa agenda was taken as the Manoa Neighborhood Board Planning Committee Agenda.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Nishioka, Pearson, Brian Kessler, Jim Harwood, George Nakano, Paul Holtrop

**PANEL PARTICIPANTS:** **Mr. Ramsey Taum**, Hawaiian cultural consultant to the Dean of the School of Travel Industry Management; **Ms. Napua Wong**, representative of Paradise Park, Inc., the lessee of the property; **Dr. David McClain**, President, University of Hawaii; **Dr. Gary Ostrander**, UH Vice-Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education; **Dr. Kenneth Kaneshiro**, Professor, University of Hawaii, and Principal Investigator of the Hawaii part of the proposed National Science Foundation NEON project; **Ms. Linda Smith**, Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor, State of Hawaii; and **Mr. Keola Nakanishi**, Principal, Halu Ku Mana Charter School. Moderator: **Duane Preble** of Malama O Manoa.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Malama O Manoa President **Chuck Pearson** called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** MOM President Pearson made the following announcements: (1) He introduced various dignitaries in the audience, including Councilmember Ann Kobayashi, State Rep. Kirk Caldwell, Father Mark Alexander, Vicar General and Pastor, Sacred Heart; Bill Burton, Business Manager, Catholic Church, the fee simple lessor of the Paradise Park property; Sam Callejo, UH official, and others; (2) The panel participants were introduced; (3) the Kupuna Supper, honoring long time residents of Manoa Valley, will be held at 5:30 PM March 12 at Tree Tops Restaurant; (4) the 1,000 tree giveaway will take place at 8 AM on April 30 at the Manoa District Park Recreation Center; (5) The Mo’ili’ili Community Center was a beneficiary of a MOM endowment grant to assist in producing the historical book, “Mo’ili’ili, the Life of a Community”, which is now available for purchase; (6) Dan Dinell was introduced and requested audience response by a show of hands for choosing the subject of the next quarterly MOM meeting— the Mo’ili’ili historical book, restoration of historic structures, or the Manoa Library rebuilding plans. The result was about equal for all three, so the subject for the meeting will be decided later. All three topics will eventually be covered at subsequent MOM meetings.

**BACKGROUND ON MANOA MAUKA COMMITTEE FORMATION AND ACTIVITY:** Chuck Pearson related the background of the events leading up to the formation of MOM’s Manoa Mauka Committee. At the end of the 2002 legislative season, as a result of Governor Cayetano’s request to the Legislature, \$5.5M was appropriated to acquire the Paradise Park property for use by the University of Hawaii. Due to financial constraints of the time and other concerns, the funds were not released by the new Lingle Administration. In June 2004, following a February briefing to the administration by Dr. Ken Kaneshiro about the possibilities for a conservation and ecological research use for Paradise Park, a meeting was held at the Governor’s chambers at the State Capitol between Linda Smith, Senior Advisor, and Geogina Kawamura, Budget Director; and members of Malama O Manoa, the Manoa Neighborhood Board, and Dr. Kaneshiro of UH, to appraise the Governor’s staff of the opportunities presented by the NEON project and to request release of the appropriated funds. A business plan evolved from that and was submitted to the State. In February, 2005 there was an update to the business plan and we expect feedback on this from Budget Director Kawamura. In July 2005 Chuck Pearson, representing MOM, and Nadine Nishioka, Chair of the Manoa Neighborhood Board, had a meeting with Advisor Smith for about 1¼ hours to understand the current concerns and views of the Administration regarding release of the

appropriated funds, and the most effective mechanism for moving ahead. Last September, at the annual MOM retreat, the board voted to form the Manoa Mauka Committee, chaired by Duane Preble.

**Preble** was introduced by Pearson to continue the topic. Preble pointed out that the deep interior of Manoa Valley is overrun with invasive plant and animal species and in general needs to be looked at carefully and managed cooperatively by public and private interests. Preble introduced Cultural Consultant Ramsey Taum.

**REMARKS AND *OLI* BY RAMSEY TAUM:** Taum recited a traditional Hawaiian *oli*. He mentioned that he has personal ties to Manoa Valley as some of his ancestors are buried here. He talked about his work with the Ala Wai Watershed Association and the ensuing Manoa Valley Kuleana Project for water usage practices, as developed by Helen Nakano and her associates for the Board of Water Supply, which made use of responsible Hawaiian cultural water conservation traditions relating to the *ahupua'a* concept which includes *kuleana*, our responsibility for the sustainability of the land which we occupy. Taum pointed out the value of the *ahupua'a* concept combining it with our needs of today, utilizing it as a systems way of thinking. He related how we can benefit by observing how the *kupuna* (elders) worked the land comprising the *ahupua'a*, the section of an island that is more or less self-contained from the offshore waters up to the mountain ridges. The *kupuna* knew that whatever happened in the heights of the mountains would more or less affect the rest of the *ahupua'a* all the way to the shore. We need to consider the entirety of Hawaiian culture in our current situation with Manoa Mauka.

#### **PRESENTATIONS BY PANELISTS:**

**Ms. Wong** deferred comments until the Q&A part of the program.

**Dr. McClain** thanked Preble for organizing the forum. He discussed how the University of Hawaii is organized, and illustrated the perceived organizational complexity with examples relating to which office certain UH senior executives report. The proposed use of the Paradise Park land is highly appropriate from the university viewpoint. \$200,000 of the appropriated \$5.5M has been released for an appraisal of the parcel. Such an appraisal is difficult, in view of the necessity of a fee purchase value as well as a leasehold purchase value, and the lack of comparative sales and the unique aspects of the parcel. Negotiations with appraisal firms are being done. Dr. McClain said an appraisal will probably be done by May 15. There is a business plan for the parcel. An estimate of \$150,000/year in the plan for maintenance of the proposed structures for the National Science Foundation's NEON (National Environmental Observation Network) project may be on the low side. The funds would come from the EPSCR grant (Experimental Program for Stimulating Competitive Research), a source of science funds that UH has had for some years. The grant is called "Biodiversity in an Integrated Island Environment". It ends in March or April, but is expected to be renewed at approximately \$3M/yr. We will need to come up with about \$40K more from other funds to go with the EPSCR \$150K to properly fund the yearly maintenance of the proposed NEON project infrastructure. It looks like that in spite of the large US budget deficits the chances of the NEON project being funded are excellent. If acquired by UH, the Paradise Park parcel would become a Manoa Campus unit, like Lyon Arboretum. Dr. McClain discussed the Lyon Arboretum situation as it has developed over the past few years and said that they are making good progress in turning the challenges around, especially with the recent funding appropriated by the Legislature.

**Dr. Kaneshiro** stated that he has been involved for the past 15 years in advocating for the acquisition of the Paradise Park parcel for UH scientific research uses. He got the community involved seven or eight years ago. The NEON project provided stimulus to this endeavor. In August of 2004 Congress allocated \$6M to plan the design of the NEON program, which is to place environmental monitoring instruments within subject areas and to periodically read and service the instruments. A year later, the National NEON Planning Committee (of which Dr. Kaneshiro is now a member) announced the 20 regions for NEON centers; Hawaii is one. NSF has requested funds to start in federal FY 2007 (Oct. 2006) for the final detailed execution plan, which will include the prospectus from each of the regions. By the start of FY 2008 they hope to begin construction of each of the 20 NEON sites. Dr. Kaneshiro said that once the Hawaii NEON project is built and underway, it will cost around \$750K/year to service. NSF NEON funding would provide all operating costs for our region for 30 years.

**Dr. Ostrander** pointed out that the NEON program activities will benefit all residents of Manoa Valley in controlling invasive species and managing the forest environment, and that Dr. Kaneshiro's vision articulates well with that of the University of Hawaii and the Manoa Valley community. The University is providing a similar dedication of continuing support for Lyon Arboretum.

**Ms. Smith** thanked Malama O Manoa in the name of Governor Lingle for organizing this forum. There are two questions which she was prepared to address tonight. First, why were the funds not released when budgeted by the Legislature? Second, why is money now being released for an appraisal? In 2002-2003 the state economy was suffering. Many worthwhile programs had to be cut or scaled back. Even though the funds were called out in a bill there was simply no money “in the bank” at the time, after mandatory and top priority demands were met. Now, the financial picture has greatly improved. The University’s leadership is stable. At the time, the Governor had reservations on how to maintain the resource if we acquired it. Lyon Arboretum was in dire straits requiring major funding. And what about the critical need for additional dormitory space and other facilities on campus? All of these issues were weighed with the Paradise Park situation. The Governor placed high priority on the needs of the Halu Kumana Charter School and was concerned about how the NEON project would affect that if implemented. Ms. Smith thanked the Wongs for accommodating the school. The school needs a permanent location. Lastly, in 2004-2005 Dr. Kaneshiro’s activities in connection with NEON now make a big difference. The Governor is of the opinion that everything is now sufficiently clear that the path is open to using the allocated \$5.5M funding, and so the State needs to establish a firm worth for the lease and fee, so is releasing immediately \$200,000 from the allotted funds for an appraisal.

**Dr. Kaneshiro** clarified that the funding for Hawaii NEON is not yet secured, but this summer. Congress is expected to allocate \$7M for NEON.

**Father Mark Alexander** representing the landowner, the Catholic Church, discussed the legalities of the parcel. The Church has no control of the property until the lease runs out in 2041. The Church’s position is to retain ownership of the land. There is a new bishop, who was born here, and he is adverse to selling the land, knowing from experience how difficult land is to acquire in the Islands.

**Mr. Cliff Morden**, acting director of Lyon Arboretum, was asked to speak. He said that the Arboretum was in the process of hiring staff and upgrading structures. The Arboretum would be collaborating with both NEON and the charter school.

**Mr. Nakanishi** related his background as a cultural practitioner and educator. He asked the audience to respond to various questions such as who were in positions of community leadership, who had Hawaiian ancestry, etc. He discussed the goals of Halu KuMana, the way it is managed, the teaching methods, student assignments, and the general background of the students. He appreciated the support of the other members of the panel and various people in the audience. Besides the needs of the students, the two top priorities for Halu KuMana are a permanent home and following best practices for the *aina* (land). For a permanent home, the first preference is the Paradise Park land acquisition and working with UH and community organizations. The second preference, in case the first falls through, is to work with a non-profit organization to move to a suitable location. Also, the school will accept help from a privately owned project that meets the school’s standards. Mr. Nakanishi thanked the Wong family for allowing Halu KuMana to occupy their premises at Paradise Park for two years rent-free. The school is in the process of working out a new agreement with the Wongs. Halu KuMana is going to seek permits from DLNR and the landowner for a permanent building.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

**Preble**, referring to the map on display in the front of the room, explained the layout of the properties in question as demarcated on the map. 152 acres are leased by the Wongs. Lyon Arboretum has less than 200 acres.

Question for **Wong**: What are the family’s objectives for the Paradise Park parcel? Wong replied that since the park closed in January of 1994 they have had many offers from commercial interests for its use, including a driving range, a gentleman’s club, meditation centers, etc. Anticipating the park closure, her father-in-law created the Paradise Park Community Foundation, to concentrate on conservation and ecology in terms of the *ahupua’a*. Because of the requirements of the lease with the Catholic Church, the Wongs have to generate income from the property so they are currently hearing confidential proposals from a couple of other interested parties. Before the arrangement with the Halu KuMana Charter School, the Wong family decided to develop a Hawaiian cultural center to allow the Hawaiian people to share their culture with dignity and grace and to develop economic independence. This is a legacy that the family wants to bequeath to Napua Wong (who is of Hawaiian descent), her children and future generations of Hawaiian people. The family hopes that this foundation and cultural center could be a model for other *ahupua’a*. She emphasized that the family’s number one priority in considering

commercial proposals is that they are culturally, ecologically, and economically sensible. Wong asked the community for their trust and emphasized that the family will not abuse it.

Question for **Wong**: If the UH plan prevails, with the Wongs accept it? She answered that they are not at this time in negotiations with UH. They would be willing to negotiate. However, the money allocated by the Legislature back then is no longer even close to sufficient. But nothing is off the table.

**Dr. McClain**: The State is not allowed to renovate with public funds property that they don't own. Purchase of the fee interest is a requirement. However, funds for renovation could come from private interests, rather than the state, if necessary.

**Preble**: There is a time factor involved. If the Paradise Park site for NEON is not secured, someone else will take it over.

**Dr. Kaneshiro**: Paradise Park is the ideal site, close to UH as well as having other benefits, but the NEON project could move to some other site in the state.

**Preble**: A land swap might be acceptable to the Catholic Church.

Question for **Wong**: The Wongs acquired their Conservation District Use Permit in 1966. Will there be a requirement for a new CDUP if an activity different from the Paradise Park operation is started on that property, considering the probability of neighbors' objections? Wong answered that the requirements of the existing CDUP, which was for "zoological botanical gardens and ancillary uses", would cover just about any conceivable use that meets the family's guidelines because it is a resource designation. Her wishes are to establish the cultural center focused on the hula tradition, including the plant life used for hula and hula implements, terrain, and environment. Most of the park would have to be replanted with native growth to support this concept. Wong then discussed the public controversy surrounding the establishment of a commercial wedding chapel. The background of this is as follows. When Ms. Wong was in the original planning with her father-in-law about the use of the property, they wanted to devote a certain area to the memory of Queen Ka'ahumanu, who had a residence in the back of the valley and who died there. Queen Ka'ahumanu was a major influence in bringing Christianity to the Hawaiian people. The Wongs were planning to have a small existing house converted to an exhibit illustrating her life, including some of her artifacts. Behind the house a tiny chapel was to be built in her honor. The word got out, and questions were asked about weddings there. Actually, there have been weddings staged frequently at Paradise Park since its opening. Wong wanted the audience to know that if there is community opposition to the idea of a chapel honoring Queen Ka'ahumanu and at which weddings would occasionally be performed, then the idea would be given up. Getting back to the CDUP, Wong said that one of the conditions of the DLNR permit was that whatever change of use that was proposed would have to have community input and support in order for the permit to be valid. In any case, the charter school has priority, and no project will be entered into that has any negative impact on Halu KuMana.

Question for the panel: Who or what entity has the responsibility to keep the part of Manoa Stream that passes through Paradise Park clear of debris? The numerous albezia trees in the area are prone to have limb breakage and other fallen parts, which wind up in the stream bed. The question was taken by **Wong**. The responsibility for maintaining the stream in the area belongs to the lessee, the Wongs. This is a difficult problem. The many albezia trees in the area were planted by Dr. Lyon generations ago in order to rapidly re-vegetate the watershed to help restore the city's water supply. They are fast growing and therefore brittle. They last only 30 or 40 years, so many of them are at or beyond their longevity. Also, some of the trees are close to utility lines, so the Park management has to work with HECO to perform necessary trimming. It is very costly to remove the trees. Park management is working on the problem.

**THANKS TO PRESENTERS**: **Pearson** thanked the panelists and other presenters and, representing Malama O Manoa, handed out gifts to all the speakers on the panel and the authorities in the audience that shared their point of view and expertise.

**Taum** The forum started with the notion of the system of *ahupua'a*. One of the critical concepts of that is about *ohana* – family. There is another thing that is fundamental to that process and that is about

relationships. It's about the relationships that we have with place, the spirit world, and one another. He pointed out that the evening had been a demonstration of how working together we can build these relationships. Taum thanked the organizers and participants for giving us the opportunity to rekindle these relationships.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Pearson adjourned the meeting at 8:52 PM.

Minutes submitted by Jim Harwood.